



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Cambodian Farmers Reach New Buyers with a Fresh Approach



Ry Saren

Eang Chakriya sells vegetables grown using conservation agriculture practices under the “Grown Right, Handled Right, Community Right” banner on behalf of a local farmers cooperative.

Leaning into her tuktuk in Siem Reap, Eang Chakriya opens a cooler and takes out fresh wax gourds and other vegetables that have been carefully packed and chilled, showing them to a group of neighbors. Emblazoned on the tuktuk (a kind of motorized rickshaw) are images of farmers and the marketing motto, “Grown Right, Handled Right, Community Right.”

Chakriya sells nutritious vegetables directly to consumers in Cambodia as part of a farmers’ cooperative working with the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Horticulture, led by the University of California, Davis.

The project’s research team is examining incentives that help farmers improve their agriculture practices. The researchers’ hunch is that farmers will adopt conservation agriculture practices (or “Grown Right” practices) if the team also helps them to adopt two other types of profitable practices that will increase their success: improved postharvest handling techniques and novel marketing practices.

So far, the idea seems to be working.

As a partner in this Feed the Future Innovation Lab, researchers from Kansas State University introduced farmers to conservation agricultural practices such as mulch use, diverse crop rotation, and less tillage. When combined with drip irrigation, conservation agricultural can help farmers grow vegetables on small plots with **reduced time and labor**.

In partnership with researchers from Cambodia’s Royal University of Agriculture, the World Vegetable Center and the University of California, Davis, the project also provided consultation and farmer training in improved postharvest handling—to harvest, pack, sort, transport and store the vegetables to maintain freshness longer. A team from the Feed the Future Innovation Lab’s Regional Center at Kasetsart University in Thailand also helped the farmers construct a packing shed

to prepare and store their produce before they sell it, complete with a cold room, evaporative cooler and sorting table.

The cooperative is using marketing techniques that are new in Cambodia to help farmers get the most out of their crops. For example, farmers appeal directly to urban customers, driving their fresh produce into city residential neighborhoods. The produce they sell has been chilled in storage and kept insulated in transit, which helps maintain its quality and nutritional content. In addition, the farmers clearly identify the produce as locally grown and emphasize that their crops are an outcome of good environmental practices.

One advantage of these improved practices has been intensified production with more crop rotations per year.

“We’ve increased yields per unit area because of conservation agriculture and the number of times they can plant in the year—from two plantings to up to six plantings per year,” said Manuel Reyes, a Kansas State University research professor who also works with the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Sustainable Intensification. “Before they finish harvesting, the farmers are already planting the next crop’s seedlings, so they are saving a lot of time overall.”

Confident in its ability to sell high-quality vegetables directly to consumers at higher prices, the cooperative has offered to buy vegetables from its members at a 10 percent premium over other buyers. Today, farmers are enjoying increased incomes from vegetables grown on their conservation agriculture plots, with earnings as high as \$1,323 over 10 months.

Follow Eang Chakriya and her husband through their improved postharvest practices in this photo essay, [Vegetables from Field to Market](#). For more information about the Feed the Future Horticulture Innovation Lab, visit <http://horticulture.ucdavis.edu>.